AN EXORTACION TO CHARITE,

very needefull at this tyme for eche man and woman to imbrace,

Compyled by Wyllyam Conway.

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[1552]

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CAstificantes animas vestras in obediencia charitatis, infraternitatis amore simplici, ex corde inuicem diligite attencius, renati, non ex semine corruptibili, sed incorruptibili, per verbum dei viui: et per manentis ineternum. Petri. Episto i. Capi. i.

CHastyce your soules in the obedience of loue, euen in brotherly loue, without faynyng, ernestly loue ye one another, euen frome the harte, beynge regenerate not of corruptyble sede, but incorruptyble. And by the lyuely worde of God euerlastyng. Petri. Epis. i. Chap. i.

The contentes of this treatys.

IN this lytel volume is conteyned a mirror for some menne to beholde, wherein when they haue loked, I wold that they shulde vse one condycyon, that I espye, some Maistresses of London, with other Gentylwomē vse. And that is, when they loke in theyr glasse they haue a wete spongredy, that so sone as euer they espye a blot or spotte vpon theyr face, by and by with the same they make it fayre and cleane.

So lykewyse (in good fayth) I wold that the readers hereof, as soone as euer they espie theyr fautes in this myrror or glasse, by and by wolde I that they shulde amend and clense away the same blot, or els were it as good that they loked not in this atal. But this treatyse moste chefely in deede tendeth to charitie, it entyceth and prouoketh euery man to charitie, in whiche is conteyned all other vertues, for yf men be charytable they shall not onely loue God feare God, and serue God aboue all other creatures, but also shal helpe, fortyfier succker and sustayne theyr poore neyghbours, with all theyr strength and myght, so that charitie good reader, is euen the hole content of this lytell worke. And in dede to my iudgement charitie is a thyng moste necessary in this present tyme to be treted on.

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TOAL THE GENTYL readers of this treatyse gre= tyng in our Lorde Iesus Christ.

Forasmuch (good reader) as the moste thyng that we good Christen men shulde looke for nowe in this age, beynge fyxed fastened, and rooted in the faith of Iesus Christ this .xb. C. and .l. yeres is charitie, whiche bryngeth with hym in company all other vertues. And maketh a perfecte full and suffycyent faythe to the saluacyon of man. For as holy Writ sayth, and al holy Doctors, and as the Catholyke Churche teacheth, fayth without charytye auayleth no more the soule, then the sape of soure onions auayleth sore eyes. Yf fayth I say then be nothynge without charitie, for gods sake let eche man that hath fayth vse therwith charitie. Now what charytie is anone by gods grace, I wyll shewe you. And in the meane tyme (good reader) Let vs somewhat talke of fayth. And how many faythes as I perceyue and all men shall knowe, that wyl not be dombe when

they shulde speake, deathe when they shuld heare, and blynd when they shuld se, there is nowe bsed fayth fayntc, fayth fayned and faythe faythfull. Nowe howe these kyndes of fayth are bsed, hereafter shalbe declared. This I knowe wel and am assured, and thou reader knowest so wel as I, that eche man in this realme hath faythe, or at the leaste wyse sobre fayth. And I thynke in lyke maner, that eche man supposethe hym selfe to haue a ryght and a good fayth: yet in deede it is not so: For as saynt Iames sayth. Cap. ii. The Deuyll hath fayth. But nowe to ende this preface. Fyrst I shal desyre al men of pardon, yf by myschaunce any thyng shal escape me the auctour hereof, for as it is cõmonly sene, a straunger shal espye a faute in a mans house sooner then he hym selfe shall. And so I thynke a man shal quyckyer espye a faute in this worke, then I my selfe, wherefore yf there be any man that shall so do, moste hartely I requyre hym for to mende it. Secondly I shall desyre the good reader not to be discontented with me for any thynge herein wrytten. Leaste thereby thou shake of cleane all the fruytes of my boke which tendeth chefely to charytie, perhappes I wyll saye somewhat that shall touche some men, wherefore

fayth of 3 sorts

then full worthy art thou to be called charitie or a charytable man. This that I wryte good reader is true, wherfore I exhorte the to followe it, yf thou denye the folowyng therof, thou art no Christē man thou art neyther good nor vertuous. For that I hearein teache is charitie, and if thou haue no charitie, thy fayth is nought and of no value. There be now a dayes as me semeth .iii. kyndes of fayth vsed. The fyrst is fayth fayntē, and that is he which I talke of euen nowe, for he hath fayth but it is not a ryght fayth, and so it semeth by his behauour, for he taketh so feruente paynes in persecutyng his brother, that he waxeth so faynt he may no lenger bere any goodnes or charite, but like a faint mā fayntly letteth all fall from him. Some other haue a fayned fayth, that is to preach one thyng and beleue an other, I pray god we haue none of these Anabaptystes, Lybertynes, Arryans, and Maris aduersaris, of which sorte last resyted we had one not longe synce. A great aduersary to that moste blessed and pure bysgyn, and not onely to her, but also to her sonne Iesus Christ, and to vs his members. I praye God I say that we haue no more of these heresyes raynyng, I feare lest many may be lykened to an apse which is fayre with

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out and rotten within: yf there be any ſuche fayneyng people: I pray god ſone open theyr hartes, leaſt they ſhulde infecte ſimple ſoules: and make them lyke to their ſelues, paſt al remedy, then there is fayth faythfull, and theſe be they. Math. v.

Qui perſecutionem patiuntur propter iuſticiam.

Whiche ſuffer perſecution for a iuſte and ryght cauſe, of them I wyll not muche ſpeke, for although ſome haue ſo done, yet not ſo many as ought, the more pytie, and all for lacke of charitie. For yf they hadde loued Chriſte, ſo wel as Chriſt loued them they wolde not haue ſtopped: but wyllyngly with all theyr harte, haue ſuffred ſome payne for his ſake, that payed ſo greate a pryce for theyr redempcion, this charite is good loue, and good loue is none other thing but charitie, for whether it be loue to god or to thi neighbour, ſo thy loue be good it is charitie it ſelfe. But yf it be a fayned loue, or a noughty loue, then may it in no wyſe bare the name of charitie, for this worde loue, without any other conſequence or matter folowyng, is a worde indyfferente bothe to good and bad as in example. I haue harde a man ſaye to his wyfe, wyfe I loue the, to whome ſhe aunſwered agayne and ſayd, ye mary huſbād

but

but your loue is so lytell, that I can neyther fele it nor se it. Nowe (quod he) thou hast iudged as iustly as though thou haddest knowen my meanyng, for in deede I sayde that I loued the, but I tolde the not howe, nor after what fashyon, so that I say, yf loue be lefte alone, she may choose whether she wyll loue well, or loue yl, but yf charitie be once named it can none otherwyse be vnderstanded, but of good loue, without which a mans fayth is nothyng worth, as wytnesseth with me the blessed apostle sayncte Paule wrytyng vnto the Corinthyans. Epist. i. Chapi. xiii. On this wyse. Yf I haue all fayth so that I may remoue moũtaines, and haue therwith no charitie, I am nothyng, that is to say, my fayth is nothynge, ye heere nowe this lyttell peece of sayncte paules Epistle telleth you what your fayth is without charitie, wherefore styll I desyre you contynually to call for charitie, and to vse charitie, as nedefull it is nowe to preache charite, as it was in the primitiue church to preache fayth, syth faythe is no faythe without charitie. But a lacke who shall preache charitie, oure preestes? Nowe in good fayth it greeueth me somtyme to here charitie so scante amonge them, some of thẽ be not so charitable as I wold wyshe them

them, for one preacheth agaynst an other, one despyseth an others promocyon, one an others learning, & one an others beleefe: so that a man can not well tell howe to auoyde the venemus enuye of this worlde, but yet I wolde aduyse eche preste to loue other, consyderynge that all the Epystles saynte Paule wrote almoste, he hath in them a treatynge for vnitie. Saynte Iames in his Epistle wylleth that yf we fall at baryaunce we shulde reconcyle our selues one vnto an other, and open our sinnes before god, he wylleth vs alwaye to loue one an other, he specyally there putteth vyche men in remembraunce of theyr dutye towarde theyr poore neyghboures. Saynte Peter also gyueth greate comfort for one to loue an other, declaryng to eche man his dutye towarde maiestrates, for where disobedience is, there is no charitie. Saynt Iohn in his epistles feruentlye doth declare what charitie is, fyrste exortynge all men to kepe gods commaundementes, declaryng that yf they do otherwyse charitie and feruent loue to god is excluded, he sheweth the loue that god bare towarde vs, whē he sent downe his onely begotten sonne to suffre death for our synnes: and he concludeth of charitie, sayenge, that who so hath charitie hath god: and who

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so loueth not his brother, hath no charitie in hym. Our sauyour Christ sayth also to his Apostles Iohn. Chap. xiii.
Diligite inuicem. that is to saye. Loue ye together, and then afterwarde he telleth them how they shuld loue together saieng.
Sicut dilexi uos. That is euen as I haue loued you. Nowe howe Christ loued vs to eche man it is knowen, parte therof might herein be expressed but for tediousnes, it is omytted, wherefore let vs all vse charitie and especially I say to you that be prestes shewe charitie one vnto an other, remembryng that Christ our mayster sayth vnto you. Math. v. Let your lyght shyne so before men that they maye se your good workes and glorifye your father whiche is in heauen. Nowe syth you shulde be a lyght to the worlde, for gods sake let charitie be vsed amonge you, that other men may the rather through your good ensamples learne to lyue charytably: then shall eche man louyngely lyue in this worlde, then shall sedycyon ceasse and charitie florysshe: then brotherly loue shalbe amonge vs. And without this as I haue alredye tolde you, your fayth is nothyng worthe, yf you lyste not to beleue me, looke what saynt Paule sayth in his fyrst epystle, and xiii. Chapiter to the Corinthyans, reade forth

forth that charitie and then shall you sone se what fruites charitie bryngeth forth. Agayne I say that fayth and charitie so charyshe one an other, that the one in no wyse can be without the company of the other. Wherefore styll I crye after one sorte and maner, for Goddes sake let eche man endeuour hym selfe to attayne charitie, and then vse it and loue God (as I knowe no good Christen man dothe otherwyse) aboue al thinges and thy neighbour as thy selfe. Mary there be some that shewe smale loue towardes hym, for they feare not to blaspheme him, to sweare and stare by hym, as though he were more byer then anye creature that lyueth, his woundes, his soule, his harte, his bloude, his sydes, his nayles, so that frome the crowne of the heade to the sole of the foote, they leaue not one member of Christe vnreceyued, ye and for a moste common othe they take his holy precious body and make it theyr swerying stocke, ye and this is done in the moste excesse of fylthynes that they vse, for when they are moste dronke, then swere they most, when they are moste angry then they swere and teere Christ in peeces. But O wycked people, O blaspheamers of God, O tormenters of Christe, O ye worse then beastes, what

shall

shall I call you, what shall I saye vnto you, ye fearelesse people, ye shamelesse people, haue you no regarde of nature, haue you no respecte to Christ? Knowe you not what you are, what you were, and what you shall come to? O thou earth and ashes wylte thou blaspheme hym so rygrusly, whiche came downe from his maiestye to delyuer the, whome the Deuyll fast hadde bounde in the chaynes of syn? Thou arte muche lyke vnto the Adder or Serpent, of whome Yesope telleth a prety fable, a husbande man founde this Adder in the colde snowe, and of his gentylnes broughte her home, and laydc her by a fyer, where she was wel recouered and rendred to her former state agayne. (But nowe marke the gentylnes of this Adder) when the good husbandman came to her and touched her, to se howe she fared, for his kyndenes she caught holde aboute his boddy and stonge hym sore, wherewith the good man beyng dered (and not without greate cause) toke his Axe in his hande and cut her in peces. Euen so our mayster and sauyour Jesus Christ, perceyuyng vs vyle and poysoned wretches, lyeng and quiuering in the cold snowe of synne: to our euerlastynge comforte, he discended from his hyghe trone, norysshinge vs with the hot fyer of feruent

loue, in preachyng and worckynge for our behoofe, and washynge vs in the swete bathe of his most precyous bloud, through the warmthe and swetenes whereof, we were brought agayne into the fauoure of God, for which kynde acte and vnspeakable benefyte, we tormente hym a freshe, we do our dylygent to bere hym, we blaspheme hym: we sette his moste precyous body in the fore frontc of al our marchaũdyse, we are most redy to do those thynges whiche moste crnestly he dothe forbydde. Beware beware, beware be tyme, beware lest by your importunable beryng of God throughe your benemus and blasphemus othes and abhomynable lyuyng: without eyther vertue, shame or feare, he sodaynely with his axe or swerde (the sharpnes wher of can not be expressed) cut and sonder you from the lyuely members of his mystycall body, and cast you into the deepe Dongeon of hel, where shalbe wepyng and gnaschyng of tethe, where you shal sucker eternall payne, where you shall contynually blaspheme, and neuer cease thoughe you wolde, and yet shall you alway suffer the tormentes due for the same, If thynke yf you loued god, you wolde not on suche wyse blaspheme hym, you wold If thynke feare somewhat the punyshemente dulye ordey-

ordeyned for suche blasphemers. Are you paste feare? remember ye not that the begynnynge of wysedome, is feare of oure lorde? Wherefore wysely loke vppon your synfull soule: and lose not wylfully that thyng whiche Christ so derely bought, but leaue your sweryng, leaue your blasphemyng. Iwys you learne it not in the new Testamente, for I am sure that our sauyoure and redemer Iesus Chryste sayth. Math. v. Thou shalt not swere by heauen for it is the seate of God, neyther yet by the earth, for it is his fotestole. Nowe in this worde heauen, is comprehended all thynges therein contayned, and lykewyse by this worde earth, is vnderstanded euerye thynge conteyned within the same, so that Christ leaueth you nothyng to swere by, as appeareth by his wordes folowyng in the same Chapiter where he sayth, lette your cõmunicacion be ye ye, and nay nay. O my lorde God where be they that kepe those sayenges? verelye neuer so fewe in England, and agayne I thynke that there was neuer so many that red these saiengs But nowe we maye se that there be many readers and fewe folowers. What, nowe there maye not a boy tell a tale but or he come to the ende thereof, he muste other swere by Christ or by some member perteynyng

nyng to his moste blessed body, nor nowe a woman can not sel a poore pot with ale, but she must swere some othe to set it forth withal, ye, euē though it be starke nought. O good God what meane these people? thinke they to haue here (Eternam mencionē an eternall restyng place? Wyll they be of the Adders kynde we spake of euen nowe? Wyll you so vncurteouslye handell hym that so gentely ordered you? I must nedes say you loue not Christe, for he sayth hym selfe. John. xiiii. Yf ye loue me kepe my commandementes. Nowe you breake his commaundementes, wherof it must nedes followe, that you loue hym not, and in that you do not loue him, you commyt sin. And Stipendium peccati mors. The reward of synne is death. Rom. Cap. vi. wherfore for gods sake loke well vpon your selues. But ye dryue of the tyme tyll the houre of death, or at the leaste tyll syckenes or some other grefe happen to you, and then wyll you crye. Esechyel. Cap. xviii. Thou wylt not lorde the death of a synner, but rather that he shulde lyue and mende. But yf you wyll folowe my councell, reste not to much vpon that poynte, for there is nothynge more certayne then death, neyther any thyng more vncertaine then the houre of death. Remember, remember wel these

wordes

wordes spoken by the Prophet Ezechyell. Cap. xviii. Turne vnto me, and you shall be saued. Here Christe byddeth you turne vnto hym, and the forme howe you shulde turne vnto hym, is wrytten by the holye Prophet Joell, loke vpon it, and turne to Christ, whyle you haue tyme, turne from your blasphemyng and swerynge, frome your periury and euyll lyuyng, gyue your perfecte charitie vnto god. Louynge hym and fearyng hym with all your harte. Yf you turne vnto Christe on this wyse, leauyng your former lyuyng, and applyenge your selfe to followe goddes commaundementes: I doute not but God of his infynyte goodnes wyll loke vppon you, refreshe you, and saue you, because he wylleth not the death of a synner, but rather that he shulde lyue and mende, such is the mercy of God towardes man. But euer take heede of boldenes, bolden not your selues so much vpon his mercy, to leaue al his cõmaundementes vnfulfylled. For yf you runne so far at rouers, lyke wantons and vnbrydeled coltes, he muste needes scorge you, and beate you, wherefore I say playe not the parte of blynde bayerde. But gyue all honour, prayse, glory, feare and loue, to god aboue al thynges heauenlye and earthly, for he is to be loued aboue

eyther Saynt, soule, Emperour, Kynge, Father, Mother, Wyfe, Chylde, or any other creature. And also beare feruent loue and charitie towardes thy neyghbour, of whiche charitie I haue somewhat spoken before, and wyl more hereafter by gods lycence takyng by the waye these wordes of Christe. Math. xix. Si uis ad vitam ingredi serua mandata. Yf thou wylt entre into lyfe kepe the commaundementes. Nowe who so endeuoreth not hym selfe with all his power to folowe and fulfyl the commaundementes of god, can not claime any interest or tytle iustely in the kyngdome of heauen, and al the .x. commaundementes receyued of vs Christen men resteth onely in this worde charitie, the one towardes god, and the other toward our neyghbour Well then syth without keppynge of the commaundementes, a man can not enter into heuen, I feare lore least our Balmongers shall not entre into heauen, our rayfers of rentes, oure vsurers with suche lyke, as they that bye they? neyghbours houses ouer they? heedes. O ye Moules ye may wel be lykened to these ryche men, ye cast vp the earth hurtyng the good garden herbes, and the earth so caste vp you lette it lye, and putteth it to no good vse, but you go further and scrapes vp more,

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in whiche doynge is muche hurte, but at last commeth mayster Moulecatcher with his spade and casteth you vp pretely, and then destroy you. Euen so those ryche men castethe and scrapeth vp the gooddes of this worlde, whiche is the earthe of man, and hurdeth it on heepes profytable, neyther to them selues nor other men (but rather hurtefull.) And at the length cõmeth deathe and catchethe the moules by the backe and then the deuyl destroyeth them. But O ye Leasemongers, ye hyerers, ye raysers of rentes aboue the value of that you set it, and ye that bye your neyghboures houses ouer theyr heedes, gyue eare a lytell to Saynte Paule, and to the charge that he gaue vnto Timothe. The Byshoppe commaundynge hym to charge other therewith sayenge. Timothe. Epist. 1. Cap. vi. Charge thou the ryche men of this worlde not to be hyghe mynded neyther to truste in the vncertentie of ryches but in the lyuyng god which gyueth vs all thynges aboundantely to do good, to be ryche in good workes, to gyue with a good wyll &c. Let this one peece of saynte Paules Epistle be marked amonge our ryche men, and then shall they soone knowe whether that they do well in heapynge theyr goodes and trustyng in theyr

ryches or no. But I pray you to what vse do they kepe and store them vp? Verely euen to vye they? neyghbours houses ouer they? heedes, whiche is a thynge very detestable: and the smoke of suche mennes doynges assendeth vp to the trone of God, and there stynketh odiously before the face of his deuyne maiestie, wherfore take good heede in tyme, leaste God sodeynely plage you. O ye wycked and vncharitable men, that do vye your neyghboures houses ouer they? heedes, wyl you for the entryng into a wretched house heare in earth, exclude and banysche your selfe from the euerlastynge kyngedome of heauen, suerly in those your doynges, you transegresse fore the commaundementes of God, and shewe your selues to be bothe vnfaythfull and vncharitable, in handlynge your neyghboures so vncharytably, whom you shuld loue & fauoure as your owne selfe. Remẽber that your lyfe flyeth as a shadow, and neuer abydeth in one state and place, wherfore moste hartely I beseche euery good man and womã to loke vpon their selues: And euen as they wolde other men shulde do to them, so wolde I thẽ to do vnto their neyghboure, callynge vnto they? mynde, that hence they muste departe, but howe sone, howe early, or how late they knowe not

not, therefore (as the common prouerbe goeth) lyue to daye, as you wolde dye to morowe. Shake of your olde man, purge your sower leauen: put not swete wyne into musty bottels: suffer not the deuyl to rule you any longer: playe the man accordyng to the promes that you made at the fonte, which was to forsake the deuyl and all his workes, goo not backe frome thy worde, but lyke a good Christen man take for thy defence the buckler of fayth, and to fyght with, take the swerde of Goddes moste holy worde, stande manfully that thou mayst say with saynt Paule. Timo. Episto. ii. Cap. iiii. Bonum certamen certaui. I haue fought a good fyght. Good reader this mayste thou do through the grace of God, for whiche I pray the cal, that thou mayste ouercome the temptacyons of the deuyll, whiche is a thynge soone doone of a good wyllynge man, for as saynt Paule sayth. Phil. Cap. iiii. Omnia possum in eo qui me confortat. I can do althyng through hym that comforteth me. Wherfore I say once agayne, stande stedfastly agaynst the deuyls temptacyons, and blaspheme not our sauyour and redemer Jesus Christ, at the hearyng of whose name: al the deuyls in hell do tremble and quake, and all the Angels in heauen gyue reuerence to it: on

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the other syde be not rygorus and cruell to thy neyghbour, consyder that he is thy owne brother, a Christen man as thou art and bought with as great a pryce as thou wast, although thy house be full of golde and syluer, and his body full of scabbes, thoughe there be as muche difference betwene you two as was betwene poore Lazarus and the ryche man, yet at the daye of Judgement God wyl regarde that selly soule with all his scabbes vpon his body as muche as he wyll do you with all your golde and syluer, ye and may fortune more to, onles you occupy it wel whyles you be heare. Thus far good reader, haue I layd my mynde, because I wolde you shulde beare a feruent loue to God: and charitie towardes your neyghboure, in the doyng whereof you shall not onely please God moste hyghely, but also shewe thy selfe a good stewarde and baylye ouer that God hath lefte to the in custody whiche is thy fayth. And now I wyl leaue the, trusting that thou wylt followe this lytell lesson, by me set forth for thy furtheraunce in grace, remembryng that the chefe poynte thereof is for the augmentyng of charitie, and increase of good loue, whiche ioyned with fayth, and so vsed catholykely, bringeth eche good manne and woman (after

they:

they? p?ogresse in this wo?lde) to the euer-
lastyng kyngdome of heauen, there perpe-
tualy abydyng in ioy, whereas with most
melodius armony Aungels contynually
synge without ceassyng, Gloria in excelcis.
to whiche most glo?ius tabernacle and ce-
lestyal kyngdome, our Lo?de fo? his pain-
full passyon and incogitable loue towards
vs bo?ne, graunte the, the reader, and me
the wryter to come. Amen.

DEcetero fratres, quecunque sunt uera, quecunque pudica, quecunque iusta, quecunque sancta, quecunque amabilia, quecunque bone fame, si qua virtus, si qua laus disciplinę, hec cogitate, quæ et didicistis, et accepistis, et audistis, et vidistis in me, hec agite, et deus pacis erit vobiscum. Phil. Cap. iiii.

BRethren as fo? other thynges, what so euer be true, what so euer be shame fast, what so euer be iuste, what so euer be holy, what so euer are to be loued, what so euer be of good repo?te, yf there be any vertue, yf there be anye p?ayse of learnyng, be myndefull of those thynges, and al whiche you haue learned and receyued, and harde, and sene in me, those thynges do you, and the god of peace shal abyde alway with you.

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¶ Cum priuilegio ad imprimendum solum.